



Report of Student Equity Committee to SSMU Council
February 4th, 2010

Submitted by Jonathan Hann, Equity Commissioner of the SSMU and Chair of Student Equity Committee

The Student Equity Committee is currently addressing 4 items of business within its mandate: Social Justice Days, finalizing the revision of the SSMU Equity Policy, membership, and discussions with Choose Life.

Social Justice Days, which will take place from February 8th to the 17th is expected to be a one of the most diverse, engaging, and insightful weeks ever planned! With panels and discussions on topics ranging from Haiti Relief and Student Privilege to Olympics issues and Student Opposition to War, there will certainly be content that everyone on campus can relate.

The membership of the Student Equity Committee has grown from six to ten people overnight! We had many qualified candidates to choose from. In the end, Charlotte Burns accepted the Representative for First People, Michelle Olding accepted the Representative for Race and Ethnic Relations, and both Ian Becker and Ryan Thom accepted positions as Members At-Large. A meeting was held on Thursday, January 28th from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM to orient new members and answer any questions they had. The new members are bright, talented people from all walks of life. They are hard-working and outspoken individuals and we are so lucky to have them. The committee is very thankful to finally have quorum! This will enable us to complete our Equity Policy and move forward in more in-depth and broadly represented discussions with Choose Life. Hopefully within the next two weeks, we will have a complete Equity Policy to bring to council.

Finding a reasonable model within the SSMU in which Choose Life can exist is the ultimate goal in the review of Choose Life. The equity committee has had one more meeting with Choose Life since last report to council. The meeting took place on January 29th at 4:30 pm. Nine out of the ten committee members were able to make it to the meeting.

Just before beginning the meeting, we were interrupted by two councilors who could not understand why our meetings are closed. This was discussed at our last meeting of Council and this interruption came as a surprise. If there are any more questions regarding this topic, I encourage councilors to speak to me personally instead of delaying an equity meeting to do so.

The equity committee first conveyed their disappointment in Choose Life based on the pro-life event that took place on January 28th. Even though this event was hosted by Conservative McGill, the fact that Natalie Fohl is on their executive is reason enough to believe that Choose Life is using Conservative McGill as a platform to essentially act



as a club. This does not show good faith bargaining or respect the negotiation process we are currently undergoing.

Choose Life expressed their discontent in the lack of expediency the process is taking. However, the equity committee feels that in order to get the most out of this process, it is not the point of the committee to draft a document to just restrict Choose Life so that they can move on and come as close to breaking the restrictions as possible without receiving infractions. We have to create an understanding of all areas of equity before this process ends.

During the last meeting, one item that came up is the contradictory nature of Choose Life's last written agreement:

1. "Not showing images of violence without prior warning to viewers.
2. Clearly repudiating hate speech and all forms of violence."

Choose Life felt that these statements were not contradictory. Their argument is that they are repudiating the violence that takes place when Women abort their children. They also stated that just because they repudiate violence, doesn't mean they can't show the realities of violence that takes place in the world.

The equity committee is very worried with this statement. Safe spaces are not created through combating violence with other means of violence, physical or otherwise. We are also quite uneasy with the notion that they refer to the images they show as "images of violence." The equity committee ultimately wants to ensure that all future images will be behind closed doors with a viewer discretion warning before entering.

The mandate of Choose Life is very positive. However, it is not good enough to be an active club without completing parts of their mandate. Part of their mandate is to help Women faced with this difficult decision, and so far there has been no evidence that Choose Life has reached out to these Women. The equity committee suggested that if students saw that they were proactive in their mandate, fundraising and reaching out to help Women, instead of just taking a moral standpoint on the issue, the perception of their club would be changed for the better. Choose Life stated that they do not want to be told how to run their club and they thank us for the advice, but they do not care how they are perceived by students. They want a document drafted saying what they can and cannot do, not advice on how to run their club. Equity committee is not confident in the degree to which a bare bones "dos and don'ts" document would be effective without attempting to foster an understanding of equity with Choose Life.

There is concern on the part of the equity committee that Choose Life is disrespecting this process and the committee. They are taking an extremely defensive position on every issue we bring up and it is very hard at this point to find mutual ground. Hopefully, this will change in future meetings.



With that said, I am very confident in the abilities of the Equity Committee and Choose Life to create a solution to the equity complaints we have had thus far and foster an environment of respect and safety for all students in the future. Clear headway has been made already and hopefully will continue so that a permanent, revived relationship between SSMU and Choose Life can be established.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or Vice President Dooley with any further questions that you have about the activities of Student Equity Committee.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Hann
SSMU Equity Commissioner

Appendix A

SOCIAL JUSTICE DAYS - February 7th - February 18th, 2010

WEEK 1:

Sunday, February 7th, SSMU Clubs Lounge, 2pm
“Street Clean-ups, Street Protests: Criminalization and Resistance from '76 to 2010”
Public Lecture & Book Launch
Hosted by Q-team a working group of QPIRG McGill) and QPIRG McGill

Monday, February 8th, Faculty of Education, 3700 McTavish, 12pm
H2Oil: What's more important, water or oil? A Guest Seminar on the Tar Sands,
Environmental Justice and Resistance.
Featuring the director Shannon Walsh
Hosted and organized by Dr. Aziz Choudry

Tuesday, February 9th, Lev Bukhman room (3480 McTavish Street), 3pm
Workshop: Solidarity IDs. The right to self-determined your identity.
Hosted by Solidarity ID project (French and English)

Tuesday, February 9th, Leacock 232, 7:30pm
Rhythms and Resistance in Indian Country
FILM SCREENING: DetermiNATION Songs & Discussion with guest speakers from
Barriere Lake
Hosted by Barrier Lake Solidarity

Wednesday, February 10th, QPIRG McGill (3647 University St, 3rd Floor), 1pm
Let's share the food! A potluck for Social Justice Groups on Campus.
Hosted by SSMU Equity Officer

Wednesday, February 10th, Moot Court, New Chancellor Day Hall, 12:30-14:00



One Man's Struggle against Ableism and Immigration Controls in Canada. A Talk by Refugee Abdelkader Belaouni and his lawyer Jared Will.

Hosted by the Human Rights Working Group - Immigration and Refugee portfolio, in collaboration with Radical Law Students' Association, Community Law, Pro Bono Students Canada and HRWG - Disability and the Law portfolio.

Thursday, February 11th, QPIRG McGill Library (3647 University St, 3rd Floor), 13:30-15:30

QPIRG McGill's Library celebrates its 1000th Title! (With tea and cookies!)

Hosted by QPIRG McGill Library

Thursday, February 11th, Exode, CEGEP du Vieux Montreal, 255 Rue Ontario E. 18:00
Missing Justice. Panel Discussion on Injustices committed against Indigenous Women in Canada with Jessica Yee, Janie Jamieson and Rachel Alouki Labbe
Hosted by Missing Justice and Co-sponsored by QPIRG McGill

*Friday, February 12th, Lev Bukhman room, SSMU building, 12pm
Workshop: Third World debt: Who Owes Whom?
Hosted by the Social Justice Committee*

Friday, February 12th, Education Bldg room 233, 3700 McTavish, 4-6pm
You Don't Play with Revolution: The Legacy of C.L.R. James.
Featuring David Austin
Hosted by Dr. Aziz Choudry.

WEEK 2:

*Monday, February 15th, Lev Bukhman room, Shatner, 3pm
The Role of Students in Social Justice Movements: Moving beyond Charity Work.
Facilitated by Eric Shragge
Hosted by QPIRG McGill*

Tuesday, February 16th, room TBA, 6pm
Moving away from the Ivory Tower: the CURE project and IndyClass
Hosted by QPIRG McGill, CURE and Indyclass

Wednesday, February 17th, Lev Bukhman, 2pm
Workshop: Activism 101
Hosted by QPIRG Concordia and QPIRG McGill

Wednesday, February 17th, Leacock 219, McGill University, 6pm
History of Student Opposition to the War
Feature speakers Peggie Mason (ex-diplomat), Cleve Higgins (former McGill Student and activist)
Hosted by QPIRG McGill



Students' Society of McGill University
Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs)
Bureau du Vice-présidente (affaires universitaires)